

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :
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 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
 COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
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INTERVIEW OF: EARL LOFTFIELD

Friday,
 October 9, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB
 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard
 MIKE MILLAR, ABS
 KEVIN STITH, TOTE Services
 LCDR [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

GIL FELTEL, ESQ., Tanner Bishop

This transcript was produced from audio
 provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 4:17 p.m.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, good afternoon
4 everyone. Today is the 9th of October. And we're
5 still onboard the El Yunque. And this is part of the
6 investigation of the El Faro loss, or accident, or
7 incident.

8 My name is Mike Kucharski. I'm with the
9 NTSB. The NTSB essentially is tasked by Congress to
10 determine probable cause in transportation accidents.

11 We have no enforcement powers. We try to
12 determine the best that we can the probable cause in
13 hopes that there will be recommendations or lessons
14 learned so this tragic accident is not repeated.

15 We're here in the Captain's office on the El
16 Yunque in Jacksonville. And the El Yunque we
17 understand is a sister vessel of the El Faro. And we'd
18 like to ask the Captain some questions.

19 Again, my name is Mike Kucharski. I'm the
20 Group Chairman of Operations, which includes stability,
21 cargo operations and other nautical operations
22 essentially.

23 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And have you sailed as
24 Captain on this class of vessel?

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Would you identify --

1 before we actually get into --

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay. This is Captain
3 Loftfield. I'm asking Captain Kucharski --

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: To confirm that he has
6 sailed as Captain on this class of vessel.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: I have, yes.

8 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And that's working for
9 this company? TOTE Maritime?

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: I worked out of Motion
11 Trailer Express.

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Oh, Motion Trailer
13 Express.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Right.

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Running to the Gulf,
16 through the Gulf of Alaska?

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Correct.

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Thank you.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Sure. And now we can go
20 around the room and identify ourselves.

21 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED] from the U.S. Coast Guard.

23 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, American Bureau of
24 Shipping.

25 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services.

1 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
2 Guard.

3 MR. FELTEL: Gilbert Feltel with Tanner
4 Bishop law firm. I'm here as the Captain's personal
5 representative.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Personal representative,
7 great. And Captain, would you state your name for the
8 record and then spell it for us?

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: My name is Earl
10 Loftfield, Echo-Alpha-Romeo-Lima, Lima-Oscar-Foxtrot-
11 Tango-Foxtrot-India-Echo-Lima-Delta.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. And Captain, would
13 you tell us your basic maritime experience and
14 schooling? If you went to a maritime school? And
15 through the present. Just give us a brief overview of
16 that.

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I started through the
18 Seafarers International Union Harry Lundeberg School of
19 Seamanship in the class of 219 in 1976/1977. It was a
20 three-month class. Sailed on the Ohio and Mississippi
21 Rivers for a short time.

22 When I chose to continue my education, I
23 chose to go to Massachusetts Maritime Academy. I have
24 two brothers that are both in maritime.

25 My oldest brother, Eric Loftfield is ten

1 years older than I am. He went through Kings Point.
2 And presently works as a Pilot for TOTEM Motion Trailer
3 Express running up to Alaska.

4 My other brother, Curtis, was Chief Engineer
5 onboard the ocean ships Paul Buck for the entire life
6 of the vessel, some 25 years.

7 I went back to school, Mass Maritime, and
8 graduated in the class of '86. And I have 29 years of
9 sailing time. Twenty-nine years in the industry.
10 That's approximately six months sailing each year.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Captain, have you sailed on
12 other RoRo vessels besides this vessel?

13 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I've sailed on the El
14 Yunque, the Northern Lights, the Westward Venture, the
15 Great Land, and then on the Northern Lights
16 rechristened as the El Faro. And then came back to the
17 El Yunque.

18 I have about 15 or 16 years of sailing time
19 as Captain on those vessels.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. Okay. So, you --
21 suffice it to say you know the vessels fairly well.

22 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: And how long have you been
24 Master on this particular one? Whether this vessel,
25 then any of the others?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was initially on this
2 run in 1999 and 2000 as Second Mate. And came back to
3 this run to the SeaStar run initially when they were
4 doing service to Philadelphia. And I believe that was
5 in 2010.

6 I can check the payroll records if you'd
7 like a more accurate time of stating that.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when the -- you
9 said you had spent 15 years as Master of the vessel,
10 was any of that 15 years as Second Mate also? Or was
11 that --

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, from 2000 I began to
13 sail as Master on these vessels. But I've also sailed
14 on several myriad homed MSC chartered vessels or just
15 activations, no notice activations and maintenance
16 activations.

17 So those vessels would include Cape Fear,
18 Cape Mohican, I did extensive work on the training ship
19 for the -- for Mass Maritime. It was I believe first
20 the Velma Lykes then the Cape Bon, then the Enterprise,
21 then the Ted Kennedy.

22 Took it through a good portion of its yard
23 periods at Bender Shipyard. I also did a four-month
24 trip on the Flickertail State going over to South Korea
25 in 2001.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Back to my original
2 question, were any of the -- besides these vessels,
3 were any of those RoRo vessels?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, those were not.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So your RoRo
6 experience is on this class of vessel?

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: As Captain.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: As Captain?

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. I have some RoRo
10 experience as a Third Mate as well.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you. So the El
12 Faro, how much -- did you ever spend any time on that
13 vessel?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. That's what I
15 said.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. As Second Mate was
17 that?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. The actual time on
20 the El Faro?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: When it was the Northern
22 Lights, there was a trip in 2003. And then it was
23 about 2010 that the Great Land laid up.

24 And they needed to have a relief Captain in
25 lay up in Baltimore for the El Faro. And I spent about

1 five months on it in lay up there. Then delivered it
2 to Philadelphia.

3 At which point another Captain came on for a
4 ten-week rotation. And I went back and relieved him
5 and did another ten-week rotation.

6 So that would have been about May that it
7 started. And my second rotation started somewhere --
8 I'd have to pull out the dates, but.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Was that at sea?

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: It was. So, you had the lay
12 up time as Captain in 2010. And then you had at sea
13 time on her as Northern Lights?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was the El Faro at
15 that time. It was rechristened the El Faro somewhere
16 around 2006 or 2007 I believe.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: So a number of months on
18 there as Master --

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Underway.

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Both Northern Lights and
22 El Faro.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: The handling of the vessel
24 itself, did you notice anything in the way she handled?
25 Was it more tender after they put the container

1 arrangement onboard?

2 Was it -- how did it react in a seaway? Did
3 you have it in any substantial seas, say anything over
4 20 foot?

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was much stiffer
6 after the container conversation had taken placed.
7 They put permanent ballast in double bottoms. It made
8 for a less -- a shorter rolling period, quartering on
9 snap rolls.

10 The same is true of this vessel now. I --
11 as Second Mate, I was on this ship with Hurricane
12 Floyd. So I did see some higher waves. And in a light
13 condition, it's incredibly sharp snap rolls.

14 In our present loaded conditions when we're
15 loaded nearly down to our marks, when we're sailing
16 with a full boat, it is tender. But it is within the
17 Coast Guard and the ABS approved stability books.

18 There's -- and you got to trust somebody.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the -- typically on the
20 southbound run from Jacksonville down to San Juan it
21 would be fairly close to your marks?

22 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: For the last two years,
23 yes.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: And why do you differentiate
25 for the last two years?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The Horizon Lines
2 terminated its service completely last year. And in
3 the year prior to that, they were having machinery
4 casualties with their ships that reduced their cargo
5 carriage capacity.

6 And the SeaStar was picking up the cargo
7 carriage.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you say they're
9 tender, it's --

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You said tender.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What do you mean by
13 tender?

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What do you mean by
16 tender?

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Explain when you say there's
18 less margin, okay? Or you're close to your marks. I
19 think you said. We can always play it back if you want
20 to.

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The marks are --

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: What do you mean then that
23 no ship is --

24 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The marks are
25 established by the Classification Society. It was

1 originally developed -- they're called Plimsoll marks,
2 and it's for insurance purposes to make it so that the
3 vessel is worthy of insuring instead of overloading and
4 sinking.

5 And this is -- runs back several hundreds of
6 years. So, the marks are the draft marks that are on
7 the vessel forward, aft and midships. And we are not
8 permitted to submerge those marks and sail to sea at
9 that time.

10 So, close to the marks is close to the safe
11 working limits that have been established by
12 Classification Society and regulatory agencies.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, let me -- you
14 were saying that the ships were stiff when they were in
15 a lighter condition.

16 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It has a shorter roll
17 period. The physics of a roll period is that a
18 pendulum will go back and forth at about the same rate.
19 That's why a clock is reliable, based on a pendulum.

20 And so the -- when you shorten that, when
21 the roll period is not as great or as long in time, but
22 is still subjected to the forces that make it run the
23 entire distance, it means that you get to the end and
24 have to turn around and come back that much faster.
25 That's what is referred to as a stiff ship.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when the ship
2 leaves close to her marks, how would you describe the
3 motion then?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The rolling period, the
5 total number of second is longer. It's more seconds.
6 So it takes longer to get from one side to the other.

7 And that being the case, there is a much
8 lower incidence of putting stress on the lashes and on
9 the crew.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned that you were
11 in Hurricane Floyd. How close were you to the center
12 of the hurricane? And were you at -- I assume you were
13 at sea at the time?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Hurricane Floyd
15 approached Puerto Rico just as we were departing. We
16 made an assessment of -- or the Captain at the time
17 made an assessment to route south and west of the
18 Bahamas through a channel known as Old Bahama Channel.

19 The Hurricane on its approach had been
20 moving back and forth. And that was seen -- in an
21 unpredictable manner. And that was seen as the
22 desirable direction to go.

23 Hurricane Floyd essentially arrived at
24 Jacksonville at the same time that we were scheduled to
25 arrive. So, we let it come in first.

1 We were coming up from Old Bahama Channel,
2 which comes up all the way along the south coast of
3 Florida. With Hurricane Floyd being here, the waves
4 and swells were going straight down the straits of
5 Florida from Jacksonville south towards Miami.

6 And we were facing probably about 35 to 40
7 foot seas at the time. We were not able to head
8 straight into them because of the motion of the vessel
9 with that much pitching.

10 And so we were taking them on the quarter.
11 And essentially diagonally back and forth. They're
12 tacking back and forth across the swells.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: So how close would you
14 actually say you were to the center of the hurricane?
15 The closest point?

16 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Several hundred miles.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: And your position at that
18 time when you were on the vessel?

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was Second Mate.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: I see. Follow on questions
21 here?

22 LCDR [REDACTED] Yes. Lieutenant Commander
23 [REDACTED] from the Coast Guard. Just with regard to
24 the 35 to 40 foot seas on the quarter that you
25 mentioned.

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's actually on the
2 bow. If I said quarter -- we were hitting them at
3 about 45 degrees off the bow. Technically on the
4 quarter is 45 degrees off the stern.

5 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you. And when you
6 were taking those 35 to 40 foot seas, what kind of
7 water were you seeing on the second deck? And did you
8 have any down flooding through any place?

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We were in a very
10 controlled environment. The swells were large and
11 coming straight down southward. But we did not have a
12 lot of wind impact.

13 So, my recollection is that we were not
14 seeing windswept foam coming off of the waves, which is
15 indicative of a Beaufort Scale six or greater. That
16 the wind was relatively calm, not calm, but, you know,
17 20 knots or so.

18 And I was -- as Second Mate, I was not
19 concerned with going and making an inspection of the
20 cargo. I do not have any awareness of whether water
21 was getting in onto second deck through the side ports.

22 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

23 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. Given the
24 heavy sea state that you experienced, was this on the
25 El Faro that you were serving as Second Mate at the

1 time?

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was on the El Yunque.

3 MR. MILLAR: On the El Yunque. And was the
4 propeller coming out of the water? Did it change the
5 behavior that -- were they so rough that the propeller
6 was coming out of the water?

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I don't have a
8 recollection of that.

9 MR. MILLAR: Okay. And I assume you were
10 standing watches as Second Mate during that time. And
11 --

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I was.

13 MR. MILLAR: And this went on for about one
14 day? Two days?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: About one day.

16 MR. MILLAR: Did you experience any alarms?

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

18 MR. MILLAR: And did you -- were there any
19 alarms reported by engineering while you were on watch?

20 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

21 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. If
22 you can recall when you were experiencing those
23 conditions on the El Yunque, were there any issues with
24 any of the lashing gear? Or cargo shifting?

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Negative.

1 MR. STITH: Thank you.

2 MR. [REDACTED] I don't have any questions
3 about that.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Back to these vessels,
5 either the El Faro or El Yunque, what would you say the
6 maximum beam wind you've been in?

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: On the El Faro or El
8 Yunque I would say maybe 45 knots. There's not a
9 single incident that really stands out though.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Same basic container
11 configuration as we are seeing now with deck load?

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. As I stated
13 earlier, the total deck load and total load has
14 increased in the past two years to maximum design
15 capacity.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: I know you stated that, but
17 then tell me what that means in containers, okay? On
18 the actual main deck. Does that mean it's higher now
19 then it was back then?

20 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's common to have
21 everything double stacked on containers. And there are
22 some triple stackings in full loads.

23 That's all very much determined by stack
24 weight. And the deck load requirements or allowances.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Irrespective of

1 weight, how about the heights? Has that changed any?

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Not really. The --
3 it's always been -- the limits have always been the
4 deck weights. So, with full containers, which is what
5 we're always going south with, there's no sense in
6 taking empty containers down there, the height is
7 fairly well restricted to two or three high because of
8 the deck load considerations.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, now when I look back
10 aft today, I see them six high. Is that something
11 different that we're talking about now when we talk
12 about the main deck?

13 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I would have to take a
14 look at that. They were stacked high this morning.
15 Those were empties that had not been stripped off yet.

16 But I have not seen six high loaded
17 containers on the ship ever.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So southbound, fore
19 and aft, everything on the main deck is three or below?

20 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Sometimes four.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you were in the 45
22 knot beam wind, what kind of a list did you experience?

23 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No appreciable sense of
24 more than a two or three degree wind-induced list. So
25 in other words, if it was rolling ten degrees, it would

1 go 13 degrees to one side and seven degrees to the
2 other.

3 I'll point out that having worked on car
4 carriers, that with car carriers, any wind change will
5 induce a two or three degree list. And it's a rather
6 constant thing at the end of each watch to adjust the
7 ballast to keep the ship upright.

8 This ship -- my experience with this class
9 of vessel is that it is far more stable then that.
10 Much less wind area, much less sail area as we say.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the sail area as you say,
12 we're talking about the containers and the side of the
13 ship?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's what sail area
15 would be.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: And your experience is that
17 there's a lot less list caused by the sail area and the
18 wind hitting on that beam?

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's correct.

20 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander
21 [REDACTED] from the Coast Guard. Sir, I just wanted to
22 ask you if you've ever seen a difference between your
23 cargo max calculated drafts and the drafts that you're
24 actually seeing on the vessel? And if so, what level
25 of discrepancy would you see?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Every time we take
2 departure, we have the cargo max information printed
3 up. And every single time we go ahead and write the
4 actual drafts on there.

5 We track that very closely. It is generally
6 a slight difference in trim by maybe a total of four
7 inches. And maybe a discrepancy of two inches on total
8 emersion.

9 Generally the cargo max will say that it
10 thinks we're deeper in the water then we actually
11 observe by reading the marks.

12 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski.
14 Just to be clear on that, you said that the cargo max
15 is showing you deeper in the water then you actually
16 are?

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's correct. By
18 about two inches.

19 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith from TOTE Services.
20 In you experiences on the El Yunque and the El Faro,
21 have you ever seen or had issues with standing water on
22 the second deck? Or taking seas on the second deck?

23 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Have I seen water on the
24 second deck, or standing water?

25 MR. STITH: Have --

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It doesn't stand.

2 MR. STITH: Have you had -- exactly. Have
3 you had issues with that?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Any water that
5 comes on is self bailing.

6 MR. STITH: Okay. So the water drains --

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It drains, self
8 draining.

9 MR. STITH: Drain sufficiently. And just
10 for the record, how is it drained?

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's side port
12 openings that are at deck level. There is also
13 scuppers. Do I need to define scuppers for this group?

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: I don't think so.

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Thank you.

16 MR. STITH: Do you ever remember taking any
17 seas other than spray or rainwater on the second deck?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What we would call green
19 water?

20 MR. STITH: Yes.

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have seen evidence of
22 green water on the second deck. I have not been down
23 there on the second deck looking at it when it takes
24 place.

25 I have walked around on the second deck and

1 have waves splash on me. It's a somewhat periodic
2 thing and it's -- but, so I have seen water on the
3 second deck.

4 And I have seen items that were on the
5 second deck, primarily the extension cords for reefers
6 indicate that they have been moved from side to side
7 with the flow of water.

8 MR. STITH: Okay. In regards to maneuvering
9 in heavy seas, let's say greater than 20 feet, have you
10 ever tried to make an appreciable course change? Say
11 anywhere from 45 to 90 degrees?

12 And if you have, how is the ship responding?
13 Is it listing to one side? Or rolled excessively?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have altered course to
15 change the angle at which the ship is meeting the seas.
16 And it is effective.

17 MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Shift gears a little bit to
19 weather, weather routing, weather information. Is
20 there a company process to discuss whether to leave
21 port or not if there's weather outside? Is there a
22 company, a safety management system? Any kind of
23 directives on that?

24 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There is no process by
25 which the Captain is required to consult with anybody

1 in the company for permission to leave port.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is there any discussion that
3 you have had since you've been out here on this
4 particular run with anyone in the office about whether
5 going outside, concerns about it, possibly changing
6 route?

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We sometimes carry cargo
8 that is weather sensitive. And when we are, we will be
9 consulted about the weather to see if it is suitable
10 for that cargo.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, the weather discussions
12 have centered around the cargo. How about the ship
13 itself and the route of the ship?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Actually none of this
15 class of vessel has extensive service in the Gulf of
16 Alaska. And it is the responsibility of the person on
17 scene to make decisions that are appropriate for the
18 welfare of the vessel.

19 So, there is not a forum in which someone
20 ashore presumes that their authority is going to make
21 better decisions than the vessel's Captain. Does that
22 answer your question?

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Not quite. I'll continue.
24 Does -- is there any of the voyages that you've made on
25 here where you've actually talked to someone shore-side

1 to explain a route you were going to take or
2 possibilities heading southbound?

3 Or did ever come across that you were not
4 going to sail because of the weather?

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: When a hurricane
6 approaches a port, by order of the Captain of the Port
7 of the Coast Guard, vessels are to get out of the port.
8 So the concept of being told not to sail out of the
9 port is a dead lead.

10 We may be told to move to safety. When
11 Hurricane Katrina was coming -- not Katrina, Rita, I
12 was in Beaumont. And I was ordered out of the port by
13 MSC even though I hadn't refueled and I didn't have any
14 cargo onboard.

15 And the Martin Luther King Bridge is very
16 low. We barely got under the bridge with the BHF radio
17 antennas dragging across it. And we got out of port.

18 So the notion of being told not to leave
19 port is an inflammatory statement or lead that I think
20 that you, Captain Kucharski, should be embarrassed
21 about.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Is there a Captain of
23 the Port order to go ahead and not leave port in this
24 port? Do you know that? Or to Captain of the Port
25 order to leave port? You know, if a hurricane

1 approaches?

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There are hurricane
3 contingencies. The Captain of the Port will have his
4 hurricane contingencies. And we take the
5 recommendations. They are the orders of the Captain of
6 the Port.

7 And for the specifics of that, I would
8 encourage you to ask the Captain of the Port.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: So you're not aware of --
10 the short answer is you're not aware of any?

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Well, there was not an
12 order of the Captain of the Port to get out of port on
13 the sailing time of the El Faro. Is that --

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Hit it okay?

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. That hurricane
18 wasn't approaching Jacksonville.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, back to the rest of the
20 question. So, is there any process whereby you would
21 call anybody ashore? Have a discussion with anybody
22 ashore in any kind of a weather situation besides the
23 cargo itself?

24 There wasn't any type of -- with anybody in
25 operations? Or any at VP level or anything like that?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. I notified the
2 office of my sailing plan at the time that I'm sailing.
3 If I am making a deviation from the standard, it's
4 almost due southeast and due northwest going back and
5 forth between Jacksonville and Puerto Rico.

6 If I'm going to make a different route, I
7 notify the office at the time that I've decided to do
8 it. They do not second guess me. They do not tell me
9 that I should or I should not.

10 There is absolutely no -- I have never
11 received anything along the lines of that's going to
12 take extra miles or extra time or extra money or extra
13 fuel. I have never been doubted on anything like that.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, you would basically say
15 it's the Captain's decision then to leave port. Nobody
16 at the company is going to say anything. It's the
17 Captain's decision to leave port and to go ahead and
18 route it the way he sees fit?

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The thing that would
20 interfere with leaving port is if the weather
21 conditions were difficult enough in port so that the
22 pilots were not willing to take the trans -- to transit
23 the vessel.

24 Generally, when there's the risk of an
25 approaching storm and the weather could possibly get

1 worse and worse and worse, the Coast Guard will order
2 the evacuation prior to the approach of a storm.

3 So, those circumstances in which I would be
4 impeded in leaving at a given moment, is because there
5 is a small storm, unfavorable conditions blowing
6 through, not a major hurricane. And the pilots and the
7 tug boat operators say, it's not a -- we're not going
8 to take you out right now.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: So you would say in your
10 opinion, if a storm were approaching, you would rather
11 be out -- head out to sea then stay in port?

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: What system do you use or
14 how do you gather weather information?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The primary data source
16 for weather is National Oceanic and Atmospheric
17 Administration. We can get their weather maps.

18 But there are many software applications
19 that use that data and make their own projections.
20 Utilize that data and that data's projections and have
21 an easy to use graphic interface.

22 The one that we use on here is called the
23 Bon Voyage System, BVS.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is that the same system
25 while you were on El Faro that they used on there?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. It's purchased by
2 the company.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And can you tell us
4 what type of information comes from the Bon Voyage
5 System?

6 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You select the
7 information data that you chose to have. The different
8 profiles. It is sent out on a six-hour basis.

9 It is transmitted via satellite. So, you
10 can specify the entire planet and all the data they
11 possibly have, which is a larger data package. Or,
12 dial it in for the relevant areas and the most relevant
13 weather phenomena that will give you information to
14 make your plans by.

15 So, that's what I do. For me to make my
16 plans on.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And does this Bon
18 Voyage System, does it provide any voyage or weather
19 routing, or voyage avoid this type of information
20 depending on the weather? Does it provide that to you?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It can be accessed to
22 make recommendations. I prefer to look at the data and
23 make my own assessments and my own evaluations.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the system that's loaded
25 on here in what --

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have never utilized it
2 to make suggestions to me.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: But it has that capability?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not looked for
5 it. I have not Investigated. I don't care about that
6 capability.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: So you gather it. It gives
8 you six hourly weather. Can you tell us what type of
9 weather it gives you? What weather information?

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The functions that I use
11 are wind speed and direction, wave height, and swell
12 height and direction.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And do you also see the
14 prediction of where the storm is going to hit?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: And how long is the run from
17 arrival -- or departure to arrival on this run?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The direct route is
19 1,090 miles.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: How much time on an average
21 southbound trip does that take?

22 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's about 55 hours.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: And is that a -- close to
24 full speed run? Or is that a --

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, it is.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: What's the full speed of the
2 ship?

3 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Under varying
4 conditions, I've seen these ships, this class of vessel
5 doing 23 knots. When we're carrying a tremendous
6 number of reefers, that utilizes an awful lot of the
7 live steam to run the turbo generators. So there's
8 less live steam going to the propeller shaft.

9 So, if we can make 20 knots or 21 knots,
10 we're doing well. If the weather conditions are
11 unfavorable, the speed comes down a lot more than that.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Are there bilge keels on the
13 hull of this ship?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There is very little in
15 the way of bilge keels. There is a -- approximately
16 oh, maybe 250 feet long on the turn of the bilge, not
17 much more than 12 inches I think. And that's on the
18 mid-body.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the mid-body. Do you
20 recognize -- do you remember if there were bilge keels
21 on El Faro?

22 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I would expect there to
23 be. But I'm not sure that I ever took that through a
24 dry docking period.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the -- to close on the

1 weather routing and the weather, you consult the Bon
2 Voyage System. You look at it, make the decision on
3 where you're going to head the vessel.

4 You have basically no discussion with the
5 company as far as any kind of decision to route the
6 vessel. You choose it. Let them pretty much know.

7 If you're weather routing, if you're going
8 around bad weather -- have you been in any bad weather
9 on this vessel on this run southbound?

10 (Telephone interruption).

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Pardon me, that's a crew
12 member that's looking for a payoff.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Captain, would you like us
14 to stop this so you can pay him off? If it's a --

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, there's a --

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you prefer doing that?

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: We can stop for a --

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: For a few minutes.

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That would be good.

22 It's probably going to be about 20 minutes. There's
23 four of them.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is that okay with your
25 scheduling as far as stopping and then continuing?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's okay with my
2 scheduling. The Sailing Board has been postponed until
3 at least midnight.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. I don't want to --

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: So I have time.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, you have time to get
7 rest and everything?

8 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Got time to get rest.
9 Got time to do payoffs. Got time to complete the
10 electronic notice of arrival.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. It's 1700. We'll
12 stop the interview.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
14 off the record at 1700 hours at 1749 hours.)

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Good evening again
16 everyone. It's now about 1749. We're continuing the
17 interview of Captain Loftfield. And today is the 9th
18 of October. And as I mentioned, it's about 1750 now.

19 So Captain Loftfield, to continue, I think
20 the line of questionings -- questioning, I think the
21 last I had left off with, I asked you about would you -
22 - your preference be something on the lines of leaving
23 port if bad weather were approaching or staying in the
24 port?

25 And your preference would be to put to sea?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Absolutely.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: And could you briefly just
3 say why that would be?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: With most storm systems,
5 they travel at a speed slower then the ship travels.
6 And essentially, you can run away from a storm.

7 If a storm wants to be in a port, the best
8 thing is to not be where the storm wants to be.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when you say it
10 can go faster then the storm, this particular class of
11 ship, are you differentiating because of your speed?
12 Or --

13 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Most ships -- most
14 storms, hurricanes, tropical storms, are the most
15 highly tracked storms that there are. And they
16 generally move between six and -- or maybe 15 knots.

17 And as with any traffic situation, this is
18 just a bigger piece of traffic. And you can maneuver a
19 vessel so that you are not on a collision course with a
20 vessel, with another vessel.

21 You can almost always get away unless it
22 keeps on chasing you.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Have you looked at the track
24 of the Joaquin -- the -- when it went tropical storm,
25 then hurricane?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you have gone towards
3 as the west as the El Faro essentially sent further
4 west then a normal track?

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: In the models that I had
6 seen, it looked like west would be a safe place.
7 Furthermore, west is through several of the openings in
8 the Bahamas, which would have dampened the amount of
9 swell that was getting through there.

10 Even if the winds had continued that strong,
11 it would have been a breakwater that would have reduced
12 some of the seas.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what happens when
14 you pass a breakwater or an island or something like
15 that when you have a lea or a shelter from the wind,
16 and all of a sudden you come out away from that? Is
17 there anything that you've experienced?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Well, the breakwater
19 does not really offer shelter from the wind. The wind
20 -- unless it's a very tall breakwater. A breakwater
21 disrupts the harmonic motion of a swell or seas that
22 are traveling through water and stops that from
23 happening.

24 So, in the absence of a sea condition, even
25 if there's a strong wind, the wind would maybe lean the

1 vessel over. But the wind itself is not going to make
2 the vessel roll back and forth.

3 The effect of the breakwater is it will
4 reduce the sea. And it will reduce rolling motion of a
5 vessel.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So if you're in --
7 being protected by this breakwater from sea induced
8 rolling motion and then all of a sudden you come past
9 that, what's been your experience to now all of a
10 sudden you're getting the force of the wave?

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The vessel starts to
12 roll.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Have you found any
14 accentuating type phenomena when you pass a particular
15 point of land? Any funneling or anything like that?

16 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's a passage
17 through the Bahamas called Providence Channel. And
18 there have been times coming northbound when the vessel
19 has been subjected to rolling from a storm that was far
20 off.

21 So, there was only a swell roll, not a sea
22 induced wave state in that place. And upon entering in
23 through what is essentially a breakwater at Northwest
24 Passage, -- not Northwest Passage, at Hole in the Wall,
25 the east end of the entry, the vessel stops rolling.

1 And then, after we've gone all the way
2 through the Bahamas and are some 14 hours later and are
3 clear of that shelter, we will experience rolling again
4 as soon as we are in the path of the swell.

5 But it tends to be greatly reduced because
6 we're so much further north and further west, which is
7 away from where the swells were generated.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, just to be clear, you
9 said sea induced swell. Did you mean wind induced
10 swell?

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. Wind induced
12 swell. Thank you.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. No, thank you. So,
14 you looked at the track, you think that heading further
15 towards the west would have been a prudent maneuver
16 with a storm out there.

17 Would you have considered running before it
18 as opposed to -- and let me say, running before is with
19 having the wind and seas bath to beam. Would you have
20 considered doing that?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: My recollection of
22 looking at the track is that most of the time he did
23 have the wind and the seas coming from aft of the beam,
24 about the beam. Which would be a favorable condition
25 for getting past the entire storm.

1 And when it became -- or as it became
2 apparent, if it became apparent that he was not going
3 to get past it, then trying to get behind the only
4 shelter available would be a prudent decision.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any -- sure.

6 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services.
7 I've got a couple of questions here. In regards to the
8 track of the hurricane, you've seen the history and
9 where the hurricane went.

10 So, your determination to go to west or
11 through the Florida Straits, on the other side of the
12 Bahamas is based on that his -- or that track that
13 you've seen?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If that was the question
15 that Captain Kucharski was asking, I was not aware of
16 it.

17 MR. STITH: No, that's my question.

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay. Can you repeat
19 the question?

20 MR. STITH: So, basically --

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What I was responding to
22 is in the presence of it, I would have done my best to
23 duck through an opening in the Bahamas.

24 MR. STITH: Okay.

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was not considering at

1 all the prospect of having chosen to, oh, here's a
2 storm out there. I'm going to route myself 500 miles
3 away from it.

4 MR. STITH: Okay. So it -- and my question
5 is, you're basing that on knowing the full track of the
6 hurricane now? That's what you would have done in
7 hindsight?

8 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Oh, it's -- well, yes if
9 I --

10 MR. STITH: Okay, so --

11 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Knew that that was going
12 to happen there, I wouldn't have gone there.

13 MR. STITH: Exactly. So, are you aware of
14 the weather routing information where the weather data
15 that the El Faro was looking at, have you seen any of
16 that from the last days of September through the first
17 days of October?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not called up the
19 weather package that arrived in the BVS system for the
20 five days before they sailed. I have not reviewed that
21 data.

22 MR. STITH: Okay.

23 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have reviewed the data
24 that was available as history. Not the data that was
25 available as a projection.

1 MR. STITH: Okay. So, that answers my
2 question on that regard. My other question is in
3 regards to the Bon Voyage System weather data, in your
4 time here, do you find it a reliable source of
5 information?

6 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

7 MR. STITH: Okay.

8 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I do utilize it for
9 planning. I do witness it as being a very good
10 indication of the conditions that I'm going to
11 experience.

12 And I have actually personally made the
13 decision to no longer download the raw data charts from
14 NOA because the Bon Voyage System has such a simple and
15 clear graphic presentation. And interfaces so well
16 with travel planning.

17 MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Captain, this is [REDACTED]
19 with the Coast Guard. With the Bon Voyage System, you
20 talked about the prediction of the storm that it gives
21 you.

22 Does it give you that in graphical
23 representation? Or is it text as far as it's moving in
24 a certain direction at a certain speed?

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's in living color.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's an entire chart.
3 My preferred analysis of it is with the wave heights,
4 which you want to stay towards the blue stuff, avoid
5 the yellow stuff. And the orange stuff is really bad.

6 And the red stuff you just want to look at
7 it and say oh, that must be nasty out there. Glad I'm
8 not there. So, it's very, very graphic, and generally
9 very easy to interpret.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Questions on the weather?

12 (No response)

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let's move up to
14 water tight door policy. Is there any water tight door
15 policy that the company has?

16 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The company policy is to
17 obey the law. And Coast Guard policy is that water
18 tight doors must be closed and secured at sea.

19 Any opening of the water tight door while at
20 sea needs to be logged. The time that it opened and
21 the time that it closed.

22 And there is a policy of completing the log
23 books, a log book entry upon departure, that all water
24 tight doors have been checked and secured. And in
25 addition to reviewing all ship stability and noting

1 that it's safe for the intended voyage.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when I say water
3 tight doors, to -- besides the cargo doors, the large
4 cargo doors that the trailers go through, the scuttles
5 and --

6 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: All water tight openings
7 as inspected and certified by both Coast Guard and ABS,
8 are in that category.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: So --

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's very clear, there's
11 no question about what are water tight doors.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when the ship is
13 at sea, do they go down in the cargo holds to check the
14 cargo?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If conditions permit.
16 Clearly if the conditions are that there is heavy seas
17 going across that weather deck, they would not be going
18 down in there.

19 But, yes, during regular inspections of the
20 cargo and equipment, those are accessed.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: So the scuttles or some kind
22 of door is opened to go inside of that --

23 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The scuttles.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: And are those logged,
25 routinely logged when they're opened and closed?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Scuttles are not
2 routinely logged. It's cargo water tight doors that's
3 specified in the official log.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: And are the large water
5 tight doors ever opened at sea?

6 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Not without logging.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, have you had to -
8 - have they been logged that they've been opened and
9 closed?

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Follow on questions?

12 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. Captain, for
13 the big water tight doors, what would be an example of
14 why a door would need to be opened at sea?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We would actually open a
16 door at sea if we were doing repairs on the plates that
17 go across so that vehicles can drive back and forth.

18 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That would be a repair
20 that we would do at sea so that it's not interfering
21 with other operations. There have been instances where
22 equipment would get staged out of the engine room,
23 which comes up the water tight door by -- the number
24 two water tight door, where we would want to be able to
25 utilize a forklift to move something back and forth in

1 anticipation of port or operation support.

2 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

3 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And it would not be done
4 in adverse conditions.

5 MR. MILLAR: And as part of that program,
6 you would do like a risk analysis? Or is that
7 something out of the ordinary that you would do like a
8 safety analysis?

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That is out of the
10 ordinary. And there would be a job hazard analysis is
11 the company form for doing that.

12 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

13 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: They have job hazard
14 analysis, hot work permits and confined space permits
15 that are all part of our safety program that is managed
16 through the office. And very specifically directed.

17 MR. STITH: Another question. Kevin Stith
18 with TOTE Services. The Master of the El Faro stated
19 in his voice message to the company, or his
20 conversation with the DPA that day, one of the
21 manholes, one of the scuttles on second deck popped
22 open.

23 In your determination, your interpretation
24 of that statement, could you envision or reason that a
25 -- one of those scuttles would pop open?

1 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I do not have awareness
2 of how that could happen. It would simply be
3 speculation --

4 MR. STITH: Okay.

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: To say that a category
6 four hurricane and the dynamics at play there could
7 have something that was not prepared for.

8 MR. STITH: Okay.

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's a -- I will say
10 that the person who was Chief Mate on there, I've
11 sailed with a lot. And I have a tremendous amount of
12 respect and confidence for his abilities.

13 And that he's also been on the run going
14 through the Gulf of Alaska. And is very, very well
15 aware of what's necessary in the way of securing and
16 what looks secure.

17 And knowing that they were going into
18 inclement weather, I have every confidence that he
19 would have had things as secured as could be. But a
20 category four brings other things into it. Other
21 dynamics.

22 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. In securing
23 certain closures, particularly in the way of number two
24 deck, or the bulkhead deck, is there any consideration
25 for closing the dampers on the ventilation trunks?

1 That you know, the exhaust ventilation
2 trunks? The screen -- there appear to be screened-in
3 openings. And then there was another closure door
4 inside of that.

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not considered
6 the use of five dampers or fire closures as a part of
7 securing for a water tight condition. And I don't know
8 of that being written as a -- as a strategy for water
9 tight integrity.

10 MR. MILLAR: Okay. I have another question,
11 Captain, this is Mike with ABS. Have you ever
12 experienced or had an indication of the bilge alarm in
13 the number three hold or cargo holds while at sea?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Not other than
15 testing them.

16 MR. MILLAR: Thank you.

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski
18 again. In an emergency situation, a distress situation
19 or emergency situation, what do you have at your
20 disposal?

21 What on the -- as far as notification,
22 communications type equipment? And what would you use
23 in priority? As a priority, you know, if you had to
24 send out a distress or an alerting message?

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's the GMDSS,

1 that's the Global Maritime Distress Signaling system,
2 which has redundancy in terms of in Morse at sea, it is
3 the primary long range. It also has narrow band direct
4 printing for high frequency and mid frequency radio
5 transmission.

6 Those are not used as much. They require
7 too many in identifying a station to have any kind of
8 communication.

9 The vessel is also equipped with satellite
10 telephone. And with the GMDSS and Morse at sea, you
11 can specify through text whatever information you wish
12 to communicate.

13 A telephone call is probably the first thing
14 that would be done. So that you'd be able to
15 communicate clearly what was being observed and what
16 the assessment of things were.

17 After that, the -- after you have a
18 telephone call, the initiation of emergency devices is
19 useful in that it notifies Coast Guard and all of the
20 watchers of the emergency signals. But really, you've
21 already communicated what you need to communicate.

22 The parts of the GMDSS system include the
23 EPERB. The Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon
24 and the Emergency Position. That's actually outside of
25 the bridge posted in a -- mounted in a way that you're

1 cloak free of the vessel.

2 Those are the methods of communicating.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You mentioned a phone
4 call. What -- or voice.

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Voice.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, what would be the
7 primary mode of a voice phone call or a voice
8 communication?

9 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You mean what equipment
10 do we have to do that?

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, what you use? Yes, as
12 far as that?

13 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: This vessel has two.
14 They're both INMARSAT. INMARSAT is based on
15 geostationary satellites orbiting around the equator.

16 It's a system that's been in place for
17 probably 40 years now. Although the -- I'm sure the
18 satellites have been changed. And certainly the --
19 what happens with carrying a signal has improved, just
20 with analog TV versus digital TV.

21 And we have -- the latest generation is the
22 Fleet Broadband, which is very reliable. Both vessels
23 have the IG50. They have -- that's the smallest model.

24 And the -- it is routed through a telephone
25 system. A regular network system throughout the vessel

1 so that a call can be made either from the bridge -- on
2 this vessel, the bridge, the Chief Engineer's office or
3 the Captain's office.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: And you said INMARSAT. So
5 there's INMARSAT-C. What is this -- is it -- besides
6 INMARSAT, does it have an Alpha, Bravo or something
7 like that?

8 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: INMARSAT is the system
9 that maintains the geostationary satellites. They have
10 -- for the fleet broadband, I don't even know if
11 they've given it a letter designation.

12 INMARSAT-A was the first one. Huge analog.
13 INMARSAT-B was when they first went to digital.

14 INMARSAT-C was very small. Capable only of
15 texting. And has been type approved for use in the
16 Global Maritime Distress Signaling systems. And
17 continues to be a workforce there.

18 There was the M and the mini M, which I
19 think came out about 15 or 20 years ago that was
20 initially for yachts. Then there was the -- I think
21 there was the F that I have on the Westward Venture
22 after the A got decommissioned.

23 And the present generation is what they're
24 calling fleet broadband. And that's what was installed
25 on this vessel and the El Faro.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you consider using the
2 SSAS?

3 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If -- the SSAS is
4 specifically designed to notify of an intruder. And
5 the beauty of the SSAS and its design is that the
6 button can be pushed, initiated, and nobody can tell
7 that the button has been pushed.

8 And there's no indication on the vessel that
9 it's been pushed. There's no alarm. There's no
10 buttons to press.

11 If I had apprehension that somebody might
12 not have heard either the GMDSS or the EPERB, it would
13 make sense to push the SSAS to really kind of verify
14 that.

15 If I had already had voice communications
16 and described everything that was going on, I don't
17 know what would be gained by it other than to simply
18 say I'm pushing everything I can.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you know what kind of in
20 -- what information the SSAS system puts out?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I believe it puts out
22 the basic GPS data of the vessel which is position, and
23 course and speed. On our SSAS, it can also include
24 writing a message that goes in with it.

25 But it's a very basic text message.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me zero in on
2 something. You said course and speed? Is that what
3 you -- are we fairly sure on that?

4 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I'm not absolutely
5 certain that it has course and speed. I have seen the
6 test messages. We do test messages on the SSAS on a
7 quarterly basis.

8 And I believe it indicates -- I know on some
9 SSASs, it used to indicate, there's two buttons in
10 remote locations onboard the vessel, and it indicates
11 which one of them was depressed.

12 MR. STITH: That was my question and he
13 answered it.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Maybe before we
15 leave, one of the last things we can do, can we make
16 some copies of the SA -- you said it's identical that's
17 -- the one on here that's on the El Yunque was on the
18 El Faro?

19 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: At the time that I was
20 on the El Faro, I think that it had one of the -- they
21 were transitioning from one to the other. Originally
22 SSASs were stand-alone equipment when the requirement
23 first came into place.

24 And since that time, Furuno with their newer
25 generation of the INMARSAT-C entered in software into

1 it so that with the existence of a stand alone button,
2 it would route through there, and the SSAS system would
3 go through there.

4 The present SSAS system through the
5 FELCOM15, Furuno sends out an email versus the
6 original SSAS systems were monitored by Coast Guard.
7 And the simple act of testing it required notifying the
8 Coast Guard that you were going to test it before you
9 did it.

10 The FELCOM15 can be tested to verify email
11 connectivity without any involvement or time and
12 attention requirement from the Coast Guard.

13 MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith with TOTE
14 Services. The information regarding the SSAS, it's
15 operation, and the test message procedures, where is
16 all that information kept?

17 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The vessel Security
18 Officer is responsible for tracking that information.

19 MR. STITH: And is the vessel security plan
20 maintained in electronic format only?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: At this time it is, yes.

22 MR. STITH: Are we allowed -- are we
23 permitted without the CSO's permission to print
24 anything out about the SSAS from the VSP?

25 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, we're not.

1 MR. STITH: Okay. Kevin Stith, TOTE
2 Services. I've asked this CSO for permission to get
3 that information.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: It would be just basically
5 to find out --

6 MR. STITH: Right.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: What about the information
8 that we're seeing, that we know it's critical. Any
9 other line of questions along the communications sweep?

10 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services.
11 Have you ever had, I don't want to say opportunity, or
12 an occasion to either test or actually send a distress
13 message from this at sea, the MFHF or the VHS?

14 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not.

15 MR. STITH: In your experience on here, are
16 those pieces of equipment tested on a regular basis by
17 the ship's crew?

18 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The equipment is tested
19 on a regular basis by the ship's crew. The distress
20 systems on them are not tested.

21 I mean, we do not -- we do not call out a
22 fire when there is not a fire.

23 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Service.
24 Also, are any other services performed, like an annual
25 service on the GMDSS equipment and certified by

1 anybody?

2 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The regulatory agencies
3 make us do it. ABS. They're in charge of overseeing
4 all of that. And there are licensed vendors working on
5 behalf of the ABS through ABS certification processes
6 to make sure that they're approved vendors.

7 And all of the equipment gets licensed and
8 inspected on an annual basis. And there's also a
9 requirement for having a shore-based maintenance
10 requirement done on all of those items.

11 MR. STITH: Very good. On the El Yunque,
12 have you ever had any problems with any of the GMDSS
13 equipment not passing inspection? Or any function of
14 it?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It always passes
16 inspection.

17 MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let's go back to the El
19 Faro. This is Mike Kucharski. The VDR on there, were
20 there microphones associated with that?

21 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I believe so. Each VDR
22 I've seen installed on this class of vessel has
23 microphones installed on them. Westward Venture, Great
24 Land, El Faro, and this on, the El Yunque, I've been on
25 all of them since VDRs were required. And there were

1 microphones.

2 I cannot specifically say that I remember
3 where the microphones were on the El Faro. But, I feel
4 confident that I would have noticed it conspicuous if
5 they would have been absent.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: While you were Master on the
7 El Faro, did you have any engine or propulsion losses?
8 And let me qualify that. So when I say engine, you
9 know I mean boilers, losses of the plant or propulsion.

10 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Not to the best of my
11 recollection.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: Were you aware of any of the
13 other vessels having any problems with propulsion or
14 boiler problems?

15 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: These vessels are almost
16 40 years old. There have been maintenance, routine
17 maintenance required. What could pass as a boiler
18 problem is occasionally a boiler tube will leak.

19 After 40 years, there's a very clear idea of
20 how to respond to that. And how to not have it be a
21 major casualty.

22 And in order for the vessels to perform as
23 well as they do, during the regular shipyard periods,
24 these things are surveyed and work is one in advance of
25 having things go wrong out at sea. It's quite

1 impressive to me, how well they work.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Gents, I'll open it up. Any
3 specific questions that you have?

4 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. In
5 your time with TOTE Services, do you feel their risk
6 management process was adequate?

7 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

8 MR. STITH: Thank you.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: How about your thoughts --
10 this is Mike Kucharski again. How about you thoughts
11 on safety culture overall with TOTE?

12 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Over the years the loss
13 of time incident reports and the safety total
14 evaluations have been annually published by Harry
15 Rogers, who is no longer with this company. There's a
16 record of being better at safety then the rest of the
17 industry.

18 And my sense is that we have all worked very
19 hard to achieve that. And that the amount of pushing
20 for a safety culture that came out of Harry Rogers,
21 though often unwelcomed, generated demonstrable
22 results. Unarguable.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Any follow up gents?

24 (No response)

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you. It's

1 1826. The interview is ended. Thank you very much for
2 your time. Sorry to intrude.

3 And I image it's very difficult knowing the
4 people over there. So, thank you.

5 CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There were some -- I
6 sailed with quite a few of them.

7 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
8 off the record at 1826 hours).
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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Earl Loftfield
Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: 10-09-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 68 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



NEAL R. GROSS

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EARL LOFTFIELD

OCTOBER 9 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LI IE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
			r ./.'
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If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED.

Initials

Earl Loftfield

Printed Name of Person providing the above information

Signature _____ above information

Date _____

NTSB RESPONSE (in **bold blue**) TO TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO
TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR EARL LOFTFIELD
TAKEN ON
OCTOBER 9, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	SUGGESTED CORRECTED WORDING	NTSB RESPONSE
3	10	Motion	Totem Ocean	AGREE
3	12	Motion	!Totem Ocean	AGREE
5	2	Motion	Ocean	AGREE
6	14	Myriad Homed	MARAD owned	AGREE
9	6	Conversation	Conversion	AGREE
9	8	Quartering	Bordering	AGREE
12	8	Lashes	Cargo lashing	Do not agree. Sounds like “lashings”
18	9	Then	Than	AGREE
19	8	Emersion	Immersion	AGREE
22	14	None	Some	Do not agree. Sounds like “Actually no, this class ...”
22	15	Has	Have	Do not agree. Transcript is correct
23	16	BHF	VHF	AGREE
29	11	Then	Than	AGREE
33	3	Sent	Went	AGREE
33	15	Lea	Lee	AGREE
35	19	Bath	Aft	AGREE
35	24	About	Abaft	AGREE
44	6	Five	Fire	AGREE
45	2	In Morse at sea	INMARSAT-C	AGREE
45	6-8	Entire paragraph	No guess at what was intended	Do not agree. Transcript is correct
45	10	And Morse at sea	INMARSAT-C	AGREE
45	23	EPERB	EPIRB	AGREE
46	1	Cloak	Float	AGREE
46	23	IGSO	1-250	AGREE
47	17	Workforce	Work horse	Do not agree. Transcript is correct
48	12	EPERB	EPIRB	AGREE
53	24	One	Done	AGREE

46848.doc

6 - NTSB Response to Earl Lofffield Errata Sheet signed